

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 MONROV 01343 01 OF 02 241639Z
ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY MONROVIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8253

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MONROVIA 1343

DEPARTMENT PASS: AF FOR MOOSE- PM FOR GELB -S/P FOR LAKE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, XX, LI
SUBJECT: U.S. FMS POLICY TOWARD LIBERIA

REF: MONROVIA 8623

SUMMARY: IN AN ERA WHEN THE IMPORTANCE OF U.S. STRATEGIC ACCESS TO THE AFRICAN CONTINENT IS INCREASINGLY APPARENT, WE ARE SLIGHTING, THROUGH OUR FMS POLICIES, THE ONE NATION WHICH MORE THAN ANY OTHER PROVIDES THE U.S. UNIQUE AIR TRANSIT AND NAVAL FACILITY RIGHTS AS WELL AS A SECURE BASE FOR OUR AFRICAN DIPLOMATIC COMMUNICATIONS NET AND OUR VOA AFRICAN RELAY STATION. THUS, THE CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION DOCUMENT CALLS FOR A REDUCTION IN FY 1979 FMS LOAN LEVELS FROM \$500,000 TO \$400,000. THE EMBASSY EXPRESSED ITS ARGUMENTS AGAINST THIS REDUCTION IN DECEMBER IN REFTEL. THIS PRESENT MESSAGE IS TO ELABORATE THOSE ARGUMENTS AND TO UNDERLINE WHAT WE FEEL TO BE THE DETERIORATION IN THE U.S. POSITION IN LIBERIA WHICH IS LIKELY TO RESULT FROM THIS REDUCTION. END SUMMARY.

1. DESPITE CONSIDERABLE U.S. SECURITY INTERESTS IN LIBERIA, FMS LEVELS FOR LIBERIA HAVE BEEN--IN THE SUM TOTAL OF U.S. WORLDWIDE MILITARY GRANT AND LOAN
SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 MONROV 01343 01 OF 02 241639Z

ASSISTANCE--ALMOST INSIGNIFICANT: \$500,000 IN FY 1978 AND AN AVERAGE OF \$1.2 MILLION ANNUALLY SINCE 1973. (THERE HAS BEEN NO MAP SINCE 1973.) NOW THE CONGRESSIONAL PRESENTATION DOCUMENT IS RECOMMENDING TO CONGRESS A FURTHER DROP TO \$400,000 FOR FY 1979 (REFTEL). ADD TO THIS A REDUCTION IN U.S. MILITARY MISSION/ LIBERIA PERSONNEL FROM NINE TO SIX IN 1978.

2. THIS STEADY REDUCTION IN AN ALREADY MINOR INVESTMENT IN THE LIBERIAN ARMED FORCES WOULD NOT BE WORTH MENTIONING IF OUR INTERESTS IN LIBERIA WERE SIMILARLY NEGLIGIBLE. BUT BY OUR OWN ACTIONS WE HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE UNIQUE IMPORTANCE TO US OF U.S. INTERESTS HERE. OUR AIRCRAFT ARE TRANSITING ROBERTSFIELD REGULARLY (ON AN AVERAGE OF ONCE A WEEK RECENTLY) WITH MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR ZAIRE, THEIR TRANSIT PRIVILEGE A PRODUCT OF OUR CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH LIBERIA BACKED BY A 1954 FORMAL AGREEMENT GIVING US THE RIGHT TO USE ROBERTSFIELD IN A "NATIONAL EMERGENCY". OUR SUPPLY AIRCRAFT USED ROBERTSFIELD IN THE ANGOLAN SITUATION AND BEFORE THAT IN THE CONGO OPERATION. THIS READY ACCESS TO A MAJOR AIRFIELD IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA IS UNIQUE. WE ALSO HAVE PORT RIGHTS, BROUGHT TO MIND BY THE VISIT OF U.S. NAVY TASK GROUP 21.6 FEBRUARY 9-12 TO MONROVIA. A 1964 U.S./GOL AGREEMENT GIVES THE U.S. THE RIGHT TO BUILD MILITARY FACILITIES AT THE PORT OF MONROVIA IF BOTH GOVERNMENTS AGREE THIS BECOMES "NECESSARY FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF INTERNATIONAL PEACE AND SECURITY". THIS AGREEMENT, WE BELIEVE, ALSO IS UNIQUE FOR THE U.S. IN THE WHOLE OF AFRICA.

3. IN THE COMMUNICATIONS FIELD, WE HAVE OBTAINED EXTENSIVE LAND-USE RIGHTS TO ESTABLISH (A) A VOA RELAY
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SECRET

PAGE 03 MONROV 01343 01 OF 02 241639Z

STATION (1959) COVERING ALL AFRICA AND SOME NEIGHBORING ZONES IN LATIN AMERICA, EASTERN EUROPE AND THE NEAR EAST; AND (B) OUR DIPLOMATIC TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY CENTER SERVING 26 AFRICAN POSTS AND SOME NEIGHBORING AREAS. THESE -- LIKE THE AIRFIELD AND PORT AGREEMENTS-- ARE UNIQUE. WHERE ELSE IN AFRICA WOULD WE BE WELCOME IN THE WAY WE ARE IN LIBERIA TO USE CONSIDERABLE LAND SURFACE TO ERECT PROMINENT COMMUNICATIONS INSTALLATIONS SERVING U.S. GOVERNMENT FUNCTIONS? WITH THE PASSING YEARS, THE VALUE OF ALL THESE FOR THE PROJECTION OF U.S. INFLUENCE IN AFRICA MOUNTS.

4. IT IS ALMOST INCREDIBLE--IN THE FACE OF THESE FACTS--WHAT WE CHOOSE NOW TO TAKE A STATISTICALLY INSIGNIFICANT FMS LEVEL OF \$500,000 AND REDUCE IT TO \$400,000. THE "SAVING" IS WITHOUT SIGNIFICANCE IN THE SUM TOTAL OF U.S. WORLDWIDE MILITARY ASSISTANCE. BUT THE MESSAGE RECEIVED BY THE GOL WILL BE CLEAR: THE VALUE PLACED BY THE U.S. ON THE PRIVILEGES IT HAS ON LIBERIAN SOIL IS REFLECTED BY ITS REDUCTION IN BOTH FMS LOANS AND IN USMM/L PERSONNEL. THIS IS "PENNY-WISE, POUND FOOLISH", IN OUR VIEW.

5. OUR REDUCTION IN THE FMS LEVEL FOR FY 1979 ALSO IS SEEMINGLY OUR ANSWER TO PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S REQUEST LAST YEAR FOR \$6.5 MILLION IN FMS LOANS, OVER AN UNSTATED PERIOD OF YEARS, TO REPLACE UNSOPHISTICATED NON-OPERATIONAL AND NON-SUPPORTABLE OBSOLETE ITEMS. WE HAVE CALCULATED THAT A MINIMUM FMS PROGRAM FOR FY 1969, ONE WHICH WOULD MERELY PERMIT CONTINUATION OF THE BASIC FORCE IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM, WOULD BE \$1.2 MILLION. TO COMPLETE THE REASONABLE (AND BASIC) GOL FNRCE IMPROVEMENTS PROGRAM,, AN ADDITIONAL \$3 MILLIMN WOULD BE REQUIRED OVER THE SUCCEEDING TWO YEARS (FY 1980 AND 1981). THE TOTALS: \$4.2 MILLION OVER THREE YEARS (ANOTHER MESSAGE FOLLOWS GIVING THE DETAILS ON OUR RECOMMENDED SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 04 MONROV 01343 01 OF 02 241639Z

USE OF THESE FMS LEVELS.)

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SECRET

PAGE 01 MONROV 01343 02 OF 02 241655Z
ACTION AF-10

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S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MONROVIA 1343

6. THE REASONS THAT THE U.S. HAS UNIQUE RIGHTS AND PRIVILEGES IN LIBERIA ARE WELL-KNOWN. LIBERIA WAS ESTABLISHED BY AMERICANS, BLACK FREEDMEN, WHO BROUGHT TO LIBERIA AMERICAN INSTITUTIONS AND IDEAS. THE TIES HAVE REMAINED CLOSE. ONE RESULT IS THAT WE SHARE SIMILAR VIEWS ON MOST MAJOR INTERNATIONAL QUESTIONS WITH LIBERIA GNERALLY BEING HELPFUL TO THE U.S. ON SUCH ISSUES AS GUAM AND PUERTO RICO.

7. ANOTHER RESULT IS THAT THE U.S. MILITARY TRADITIONALLY

HAS HAD EXTREMELY CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE GOL MILITARY. LIBERIAN OFFICERS TRAIN ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY IN THE U.S. THE GREATER PART OF LIBERIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS U.S.-MADE. THE PRESENCE OF THE MILITARY MISSION, THE INTERNATIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION AND TRAINING (IMET) PROGRAM AND THE USE OF U.S. DEFENSE MATERIEL ARE BASIC FACTORS IN MAINTAINING A STRONGLY PRO-U.S. ATTITUDE WITHIN THE LIBERIAN MILITARY.

8. THE REDUCTIONS IN FMS AND IN USMM PERSONNEL, INVOLVING AS THEY DO RELATIVELY SMALL EXPENDITURES, SEEM T US IN CONTRADICTION TO OUR BASIC INTERESTS IN LIBERIA. THE REDUCTIONS PUT THE LIBERIAN LEADERSHIP IN THE POSITION OF BEING FORCED TO CONSIDER ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF HELP. ALTHOUGH, AS PRESIDENT TOLBERT HAS CONFIRMED, THEY PREFER TO CONTINUE AN ASSOCIATION WITH
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PAGE 02 MONROV 01343 02 OF 02 241655Z

US, WE SEEM TO FORCE ON THEM OTHER COURSES. IF THIS SHOULD HAPPEN--AS IN THE LONG RUN WE MUST EXPECT--WE SHALL HAVE NO CAUSE TO COMPLAIN. IN THE INTEREST OF SAVING PENNIES, WE SHALL HAVE BEGUN A PROCESS OF DIMINUTION IN OUR INFLUENCE HERE, AND--NECESSARILY--IN THE SCOPE OF THE ADVANTAGES WE ENJOY. WE CANNOT PREDUCT WHAT OUTSIDE POWERS MIGHT GROW IN INFLUENCE AS WE DECLINE BUT IT IS CERTAIN THAT OUR ADVERSARIES WOULD BE WILLING TO MAKE HIGHLY REWARDING TO THE GOL EVEN MODEST SHIFTS IN THEIR DIRECTION.

9. IN SUMMATION, IF WE VALUE THE ADVANTAGES, PRIVILEGES AND RIGHTS PROVIDED THE U.S. BY THE GOL, WE SHOULD--RATHER THAN CUT THE MODEST FMS LEVEL --AGREE TO PROVIDE THE EQUALLY MODEST SUMS SUGGESTED IN THIS MESSAGE.
CARTER

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